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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 001269

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2019
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MAS](#) [MCAP](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY FORCES CAPTURE KEY TERRORIST IN MINDANAO

REF: MANILA 046: PHILIPPINE AUTHORITIES CAPTURE KEY
TERRORIST IN MINDANAO

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reasons 1.4 (a), (b)

11. (C) In a significant counterterrorism success, elements of the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police (PNP) June 11 captured Ansar Bernardino Venancio, a known Moro Islamic Liberation Front Special Operations Group (MILF-SOG) member and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) associate, in Marawi City, Lanao Del Sur Province, Mindanao. Venancio and his wife were captured by Philippine authorities during a raid at a local boarding house. Venancio was initially identified through photographs and wounds to his abdomen and left arm from a previous firefight. His identity was later confirmed by his brother Omar, who is currently in a Manila prison after being captured by Philippine authorities earlier this year (reftel).

12. (C) Venancio, along with his brother Omar, have long been suspected by Philippine authorities as masterminds or participants in a series of bombings throughout metro Manila in late 2000, the bombing of the Davao International Airport in 2003, and a deadly bombing which killed five people at a bus station in Davao City on Valentine's Day in 2005. Both brothers also have long-standing ties as active members in MILF-SOG and JI, as well as assisting the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) with logistics and operational planning. Both JI and ASG are designated Foreign Terrorist Groups by the USG (reftel).

13. (C) Since being targeted by the Philippine authorities in 2005, the Venancio brothers had escaped several military and police raids over the past four years. The Philippine government had offered a five million peso reward (approximately USD 110,000) for the arrest or capture of each of the brothers (reftel). This successful joint operation between the Philippine Army and the PNP resulting in the capture of the second Venancio brother illustrates a growing capability of Philippine security authorities to set aside routine interagency rivalries and coordinate efforts in combating terrorism.

KENNEY